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ABSTRACT

This profile in outline form of the English language teaching situation in the Central African Republic discusses the role of English and English within the educational system. While French is the official language and Sango is the national language, English is taught in all secondary schools, is used as the medium of instruction in the University English department and for teacher training classes, and is becoming increasingly popular. The number of hours devoted to English weekly that correspond to high school and college levels are outlined, and the role of English in various degree programs is described. The profile concludes with a discussion of instruction in commercial English and instruction for adults, the English teaching staff, and the teaching materials used, including a list of textbooks in use. (CLK)

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ENGLISH-TEACHING INFORMATION CENTRE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROFILE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Country: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

April 1975

1. Role of English

French is the official language of the country but Sango is the national language. In businesses and contact with people whether on a personal or professional level French is needed for communication purposes. All TV programmes and radio stations use French and Sango as the means of communication. English is not used as a medium of instruction except in the University English Department and in teacher training classes at the Ecole Normale Superieure where both French and English play an important role in terms of instruction. English is taught in all secondary schools (College d'Enseignement General and Lycee). English is becoming increasingly popular and the government is interested in liaison with Anglophone African countries for purposes of diplomacy, commerce and tourism.

2. English within the Educational System

Since there is a shortage of professional teachers in the country, each year the hours allocated to certain subjects depend on the number of teachers available that particular year. Because of this lack of teachers, each level (6e, 5e, etc.) are not given the same number of hours a week and the number of class hours devoted to English passed down by the Ministry of Education are normally:

2.1 Hours Fewer hours are allocated to English than French

Institution	Hours per week
Lycees (10 in the country)	
6e	5
5e	4
4e, 3e, 2e, 1e, & Terminale	3
C.E.G. (12 in the country)	
6e	3 or 4
5e	"
4e, 3e	"
Ecole Normale Superiéure	
APL	6
(Année Préparatoire en Lettres)	
1e	14 & 4 in Methodology
(Première Année)	
2e	14 & 4 in Methodology
(Deuxième Année)	

Ecole Normale Primaire APL - 3hrs.; 1st year - 3hrs.; 2nd year - 2hrs

Ecole Nationale d'Administration 1st year - 1½hrs.; 2nd year - 2hrs

The Ecole Normale Primaire and Superiéure are combined into one institution. The teachers in the ENP are not expected to learn English for teaching purposes but rather as a part of their general education. However, serious thought is being put into abandoning English learning at the ENP because of the very low level of students and its inutility in primary schools. Most of the work at this level consists of dialogues and emphasis is put on conversation.

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2.2 At the ENS and University levels some English literature is taught. More time is given to literature in the University than at the ENS because the students at the University have interpreting in mind as a vocation rather than teaching. So, literature (African, English and American authors) is emphasized greatly but due to insufficient materials and facilities this prevents the student from having a more complete appreciation and knowledge of literature.

With the arrival of Peace Corps (1972) emphasis on conversation became popular. Translation was and still is considered as the medium for testing a student's ability in the language. However, many teachers (French, Central African) have noticed that a student is able to comprehend more when his speaking abilities are improved and exercised in the classroom.

2.3 Examinations in the CAR follow the French system. After class 3e the students at the Lycées and C.E.G.'s are required to take a national exam, B.E.P.C. (Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle) which is in theory oral. However, the French and Central African teachers require the students to translate orally into French. The grading is based on a possible 20 points where 10 is the pass mark. The student is examined on a number of texts, usually 12-15, that he has studied throughout the year. He is thus tested on Pronunciation, Grammar, Comprehension and Translation. After class Terminale the students take another national exam, Baccalaureat, which is both oral and written depending on the serie that the student is in. The series are divided as follows:

Serie A - Lettres (emphasis on languages thus a written and oral exam in English is required)

Serie B - Socio-Economics (only oral exam in English required)

Serie C - Mathematics and Physics (only oral exam required)

Serie D - Mathematics and Natural Science (only oral required)

Also, coefficients are given to note the degree of importance English has in each serie. For example, Serie A has a co-efficient of 4, Serie B has a co-efficient of 3, Serie C has a co-efficient of 2 and Serie D a co-efficient of 2 also. Again, the student at this level is tested on a number of texts studied throughout the year. Grading system and criteria for grading is similar to that of the B.E.P.C. in 3e. In other Francophone countries such as Cameroon, Ivory Coast, etc. an exam is required after class 1e, the Probatoire, but it does not exist in the Central Africa Republic. Also, the Terminale students have a choice of taking the French Bac. or the National Bac. If successful on the French Bac. the students can more successfully seek scholarships abroad than with the National Bac. Furthermore, the National Bac., prepared in CAR, is on a much lower scale. Many students prefer not to risk failure and few take the French Bac.

2.4 English is not required at present for advancement. The Bac enables a student to enter the University to follow any course he desires. However, at the ENS students can enter without Bac, but entry is given to those who obtain satisfactory results on the Concours d'Entrée. The Concours in English is given to both English majors and non-English majors (History, Geography and Science majors).

The ENS trains students as teachers for a period of three years. For English teaching one begins in APL (Année Préparatoire en Lettres) then advances to 1LA (premiere année en lettres - anglais) and finally 2LA (deuxieme année en lettres - anglais). In theory, practice teaching begins in February and lasts for one month, however this has a tendency to fluctuate. Those in 1LA practice teach in a C.E.G. whereas those in 2LA practice teach in Lycées. They are

required to teach a total of 3 hours a week in a subject. Most of the students who are trained as English teachers are in a Bilingual programme (French-English) thus 3 hours of French a week is given to them during practice teaching as well. At the same time they resume classes at the ENS (evening seminars or Saturday morning classes). At the end of the second year the students take an examination if school assignments are acceptable. Again with the lack of professional help some who have not passed still become teachers but receive a somewhat smaller salary. The degree which they receive at the end of the work at the ENS is the C.A.P. - C.E.G. which enables them to teach up to and including 3e. In 1973 there were 8 who received such degrees; 1974 8 more received this degree and this year there should be 10 candidates for this degree.

The Ecole Nationale d'Administration admits students on the basis of Concours d'Entrée held at the beginning of each year. Most of the students here are those who have the Brevet (3e) and the Bac.(Terminale). They enter with the intent of working in the administrative field (Ministries, for the most part). The classes are divided into 1st year and 2nd year. After the second year the students are sent to do a 'stage' either in the Ministries located in the capital, Bangui, or 'en province' to work in the prefectorates or the like. It is here that the language laboratory, donated by AID (Agency for International Development), is located. Unfortunately, the students are not exposed to a great deal of English during their 2 years there so the language laboratory goes practically untouched.

In its third year as a university the university has no students who have completed the two years of required course work. Most of the students who enter into the Faculté de Lettres (English) follow the coursework designed for an interpreter or a translator. However, there are a few who intend to teach English in the second cycle (2e, 1e and Terminale). The program is set up on a three year basis, the curriculum being in conjunction with the University programme in France. The first year, DUEL 1 (Diplome Universitaire d'Etudes Littéraires) and the second year, DUEL 2 take such courses as:

Phonetics
Practical English
Comprehension
English grammar
Translation (French to English and English to French)
Civilization - English and American
French/Second language (Spanish or German)
Linguistics

The number of hours given to each subject depends on the level. Of course, DUEL 2 receives more hours for each subject than DUEL 1. Additional courses such as Stylistique Compare and Lecture are offered to the second year students. After the second year the students are sent to France or Abidjan (mainly France) in order to finish the third year. These students, if successful, will receive the licence.

2.5 Inspection. There is no formal inspection of English teachers. However, there is someone working with IPN (Institut Pedagogique National) who is considered as a General Secondary School Inspector. So, from time to time he would inspect teachers (Maths, English etc.) but nothing of any importance. No one concentrates on any one subject matter. At present, there has been little mention of any inspections due to the small staff and the insurmountable amount of work to be done.

2.6 Commercial English. There are two technical schools. One is the C.E.T. (College d'Enseignement Technique) which has just been dissolved and the Lycée Technique.

2.7 Teaching English to Adults. This is done by the American Embassy in conjunction with the Cultural Center there. The teachers for the most part are Embassy wives but some PCV's have participated when needed. The students are usually government officials representatives from various Ministries in the capital (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, etc.).

3. Teaching Cadre. There are French, Russian, Central African and a few Sudanese refugees who compose the teaching faculty in the schools of C.A.R. The French, of course, dominate but there are some who are on various contracts which help increase the teaching staff even more:

16 Central Africans (lettres)
(English - French)
14 Local Contracts
7 Ex-Patriots
19 Mission d'Aide Corporation

There is only one British teacher. He is a UN expert teaching at the Ecole Normale Superiéure. The teaching staff in most of the schools is varied (French, Russian, Central African, American), however, in most of the C.E.G.'s the ratio of Central Africans to foreigners is about 5:1.

4. Teaching Materials

4.1 The textbooks, L'Anglais par l'Illustration, have been in use for quite some time now and hopes of new and more interesting books to replace the old look dismal. In many of the schools there are not enough of the present textbooks to go around so many students must rely on their notebooks to retain any of the lesson taught. There is very little access to any English reading material. The American Cultural Center offers little as it has not functioned fully for many years.

4.2 Textbooks in use

L'Anglais par l'Illustration
P M Richard and Wendy Hall, Hachette, 1959 and 1965.

L'Anglais par l'Action
P M Richard and Wendy Hall, Hachette, 1959 and 1965.

L'Anglais par la littérature
P M Richard and Wendy Hall, Hachette,

La Vie en Amérique

The CLAD method and materials do not exist in the C.A.R. However, many PCV's who were exposed to the CLAD method and were supplied with CLAD materials incorporate this into their classes in lieu of the regular six-point lesson.

Prepared by a member of Peace Corps Volunteers